

Minnesota Veterans' Home Complex, Paint Shop and Garage
5101 Minnehaha Avenue South
Minneapolis
Hennepin County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-74-L

HABS
MINN,
27-MINAP,
19-L-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
MINNESOTA VETERANS' HOME COMPLEX,
PAINT SHOP AND GARAGE

74-L
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Location: 5101 Minnehaha Avenue South, Minneapolis,
Hennepin County, Minnesota

USGS St. Paul West Quadrangle, Universal
Transverse Mercator Coordinates: Zone 15;
483960:4973380; 484140:4972680; 483640:4973140

Present Owner: State of Minnesota.

Present Occupant: Minnesota Veterans' Home.

Present Use: Paint storage, workshop and garage.

Significance: The Paint Shop and Garage was used by the maintenance department according to the information I gathered, but now the place is more or less used for the storage of paints, equipment and partially as a workshop for some maintenance men. It has a lower level with tunnels connecting to some other buildings in the complex (e.g. Paint Shop and Building No. 16). These tunnels were carved out by hand and they have rounded arches at the ceilings. The materials they used looked like stones worked into shapes -- they are rectangular in shape about 3" x 6" x 3". It was constructed in 1899. This building is important because it shows some hood elements of arching and tunneling construction in the late 19th Century in Minnesota. Unfortunately, this building has been slated to be demolished.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of Erection: 1899.
2. Architect: Unknown.
3. Original and Subsequent Owners:
1899, Minnesota Veterans' Home.
1988, Minnesota Veterans' Affairs.
4. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers: The 1899 Paint Shop and Garage was built using burned bricks. It has a flat roof and concrete floors. Contractors and suppliers were unknown.

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5. Original Plans and Construction: Not available, but in the process of my search, I uncovered a remodeling drawing of it by Jacobson & Jacobson Architects. These remodeling drawings were never executed.

B. Historical Context:

Franklin Steele hired Ard Godfrey in 1847, a millwright from Maine to build a sawmill at St. Anthony Falls. This undertaking was very successful and because of this, in 1852, Ard Godfrey had a claim made out to him by Captain Monroe of Fort Snelling which included the present site of the Soldiers' Home complex. He had a mill and a house built in about late 1853 at the mouth of the Minnehaha Creek. Ard Godfrey started to improve this mills, he built a port at the mouth of the Creek and the Mississippi River. This served as a landing for the boats coming in through the Mississippi River to St. Anthony Falls. This was later known as Godfrey Point in 1866. Ard Godfrey owned the vast majority of the land in this area and between 1871 and 1883, he began to sell the land in small plots. In 1883, the Minnesota Parks Commission was formed and what makes up the present day Soldiers' Home was acquired.

In 1887, when Minnesota began to look on the problems facing its veterans, an agreement was reached by the Legislature that a Home should be provided for these veterans. The construction was authorized by the Legislature. This was to provide a shelter for veterans and their immediate families. This present site was then acquired. The Paint Shop Building was formerly called the Water Tower Building. In 1887, the complex was known as the Minnesota Soldiers' Home, but presently it is called the Minnesota Veterans' Home.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: The Paint Shop and Garage is a one- and two-story building depending on where you approach it. If approached from the east side, it is a one-story building; but if approached from the west side it is definitely a two-story structure. The 1899 structure exterior is constructed of red bricks, the interior is a massive space. The roof is flat.
2. Condition of the Fabric: The Paint Shop Building appears to be structurally sound and its exterior fabric is in good condition. But unfortunately it has been slated to be demolished.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The Paint Shop is located between building no. 16 and the southeast corner of the Ten-stall Garage. The combined dimensions are about 70' x 30'.
2. Foundations: A thick limestone footing supports the structure.
3. Walls:
 - a. North Elevation: The north facade is mostly a mass of red brick with a door 6'2" x 2'11" opening to the lower level.
 - b. South Elevation: The south facade has no openings in it. Mostly red brick walls.
 - c. East Elevation: Has some openings and this is where its main entrances are located.
 - d. West Elevation: Has four arched window openings in the upper floor 2'10" x 4'2", and a large rectangular window in the lower level 9'6" x 4'2".
4. Structural System, Framing: All the divisions have load bearing brick walls.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and Doors: The lower level has a door at the north facade, 6'2" x 2'11". At the upper level, there are five doors in the east facade -- 7' x 7". Approaching from the south, the first door is a double swing type; while the second, third and fifth are made of 2" x 2" planks nailed together vertically. The fourth door is exactly like the one at the Ten-stall Garage, except it has a glass put into it horizontally at the halfway up to three-quarters of its heights.
 - b. Windows: Mostly wood windows on both floors.
6. Roof: It has a flat roof.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor Plans:
 - a. Typical plan: The building has no division inside it on the first floor, but in the lower level it has three divisions. These divisions are made by brick walls.

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2. Stairways: It has a stairway leading to the lower level from the outside (north facade). The stairway is made of concrete.
3. Flooring: The two floors have concrete slabs.

D. Site:

1. General Setting and Orientation: The Paint Shop Building and Garage was built as a maintenance shop in the Minnesota Veterans' Home Complex. The site rises in elevation from the creek side. The building can be approached from both the north, south, and east sides. The main entry being on the east side.
2. Other buildings in the complex:
 - a. Domiciliary Building No. 1 (1888).
 - b. Domiciliary Building No. 2 (1888).
 - c. Domiciliary Building No. 4 (1891).
 - d. Domiciliary Building No. 5 (1891).
 - e. Domiciliary Building No. 6 (1905).
 - f. Main Dining Room No. 7 (1902).
 - g. Domiciliary Building No. 9 (1936).
 - h. Administration Building No. 10 (1892).
 - i. Storage Building (1921).
 - j. Laundry No. 13 (1891).
 - k. Power House No. 14 (1937).
 - l. Ten-stall Garage (1925).
 - m. Carpenter Shop No. 12 (1950).
 - n. Infirmary-Clinic No. 16 (1973).
 - o. Residential Care No. 17 (1977).
 - p. Chapel Auditorium No. 15 (1962).

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Books:

Bezant, Barbara and Alan K. Lathrop. Drafting a House History. Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, 1979.

Bullock, Orin. The Restoration Manual. Norwalk, Connecticut: Silvermine Publishers, 1966.

Fitch, James. Historic Preservations: Cultural Management of the Built World. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982.

History of Hennepin County. Warner. North Star Publishing, 1881.

2. Publications:

Ellsworth, Linda. The History of House, How to Trace It. Nashville, Tennessee: American Association for State and Local History, 1976, Technical Leaflet No. 89.

History Procedures Manual. Historic American Buildings Survey. Washington: National Parks Service, 1983.

Green, Russell R. Minnesota Veterans' Home. Minnesota Historical Society, UB 384. M6G73.

3. Miscellaneous:

Minneapolis Historical Society Audio-Visual Library-Photograph Collection.

Minneapolis History Collection, Minneapolis Public Library.

- B. Original Architectural Drawings: Architectural drawings for the original building were not found. However, plans for remodeling drawn by Jacobson & Jacobson Architects were in the boiler house. These plans were undated and looking at the plans closely, the remodeling was never carried out.

Prepared by:
Felix Okotete
University of Minnesota
April, 1988

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was prepared as a class project for Architecture 5143, Historical Building Research and Documentation, a class offered in the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, Minnesota. The class project was prepared under the direction of Professor Foster W. Dunwiddie in cooperation with the State Historic Preservation Office of the Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota. Historical data was compiled by Felix -O- Okotete, University of Minnesota, April, 1988.